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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG INTELLIGENCE CHIEF IN LIMBO AFTER
JULY 14 KIDNAPPING IN MOGADISHU

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson. Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Following the TFG's July 21 decision to fire TFG Director of National Security Mohammed Sheikh, and energetic efforts to reverse the decision by the SRSG, the French Ambassador, and Assistant Secretary Carson, Sheikh confirmed to the Somalia Unit July 27 that he had not been sacked, but was in professional limbo until mid-August, while the TFG leadership contemplated its next steps. Sheikh believed he had been made a scapegoat for the July 14 kidnapping of two French intelligence agents in Mogadishu. In spite of the TFG's rough treatment of him Sheikh, who is in Nairobi for medical tests following a near-uninterrupted five-month stint in the Somali capital, professed his continued loyalty to the government. That loyalty was leavened with a good deal of bitterness over the way he had been treated in the wake of the kidnapping, however. Sheikh traced some of his problems to efforts by Police Commissioner "Qeybdiid" and Interior Minister Abdulkadir Omar to oust him. He also, less credibly, blamed Prime Minister Sharmarke's unhappiness with his Rahanweyn clan credentials. On other matters, Sheikh pegged Hisbul Islam Chairman Aweys as in steep decline and said that Aweys was about to be "eaten" by al-Shabaab. TFG President Sharif, he said, has surrounded himself with diaspora Somalis who have little idea how to operate in Mogadishu. Somalia Unit has pressed Prime Minister Sharmarke repeatedly to re-consider the TFG's decision to fire Sheikh, one of the few TFG key personalities, other than the President and Prime Minister, who have generally resisted the temptation to abandon Mogadishu. We intend to continue to push for Sheikh's re-instatement. End summary.

Intelligence Chief Scapegoated

¶2. (C) Transitional Federal Government (TFG) Director of National Security Mohammed Sheikh confirmed to Somalia Unit July 27 that he believed he had been made a scapegoat for the July 14 kidnapping of two French intelligence agents at a Kilometer Four Mogadishu hotel. Sheikh noted that personnel purportedly loyal to TFG Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdulkadir Ali Omar had participated in the kidnapping. Sheikh had compensated for whatever negligence he may have exhibited by, he said, working with the police to take possession of one of the kidnappers' vehicles, and by detaining fourteen suspects. Four of the fourteen have been convicted, Sheikh said.

¶3. (C) Sheikh, choosing his words carefully, said that he could "not say if (Minister of Interior Omar) had been involved in the kidnapping. He did think that the Minister should be fired, though. Protecting Minister Omar from that fate, Sheikh thought, was his proximity to President Sharif. The Minister of Interior had alleged that he was likely to be

assassinated by al-Shabaab, and was sleeping in Villa Somalia, which gave him more access to President Sharif than Sheikh had.

Isolated President

¶4. (C) Contributing to President Sharif's inability to make informed decisions about events in Mogadishu, Sheikh thought, was the President's staff at Villa Somalia. Sheikh described Amcit Abdikarim Jama and British citizen Hassan Moalim as too unfamiliar with the realities of contemporary Somalia to help the President maneuver successfully in Mogadishu. Their cautious approach meant that President Sharif did not venture into Mogadishu as often as necessary. While the risk to Sharif, Sheikh admitted, was high, he had to be seen out and about among Somalis if the TFG was to remain relevant.

Many Reasons for Effort to Oust Mohammed Sheikh

¶5. (C) The current campaign against Sheikh was another by-product of President Sharif's isolation, Sheikh said. Sheikh believed that President Sharif was being fed bad information by enemies, some of whom wanted to undermine the TFG National Security Agency. Key to that effort was TFG Police Commissioner and warlord Abdi Hassan Awale "Qeybdiid" (Hawiye/Habr Gedr/Saad). Sheikh alleged that "Qeybdiid" was worried that he would be eclipsed by rivals, like his Deputy, Mohammed Nur (Digil and Mirifle/Hadame), who "Qeybdiid" was attempting to fire after he had played a key role in the

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detention of the two vehicles and the fourteen persons who participated in the July 14 kidnapping of two French intelligence agents in Mogadishu. Sheikh alleged as well that, while willing to support the TFG's military efforts, "Qeybdiid" had little interest in their ultimate success, as a successful TFG might no longer need to work with warlords like "Qeybdiid" and "Indha Adde" (the TFG Minister of State for Defense). That meant, Sheikh alleged, that "Qeybdiid's" forces would inexplicably retreat after making significant gains during fighting in Mogadishu against al-Shabaab. Recent talk of impunity by the UN and by other members of the international community, Sheikh said, had also unnerved "Qeybdiid." (In addition to the preceding, Sheikh repeated other rumors about "Qeybdiid," among them that he was responsible for the death of Banadir Region Police Chief Colonel Ali Said, who was killed in Mogadishu fighting on June 17.)

¶6. (C) Also causing problems, Sheikh alleged, were clan pressures on TFG Prime Minister Sharmarke (Darod/Majertein). Some of the Majertein were unhappy that former National Security Agency Director Mohammed Warsame "Darwish" (Darod/Majertein) had been replaced by Sheikh (Digil & Mirifle/Elay). (On the other hand, the rumored replacement for Sheikh's replacement, should he be fired, is Mohamed Ali Attosh (Digil & Mirifle).)

International Pressure Slows Sheikh's Ouster

¶7. (C) Sheikh thought he would remain in limbo "for the next two or three weeks" while the TFG leadership mulled next steps. Pressure from the international community, foremost on President Sharif, was essential if he was to retain his job, Sheikh said. Sheikh was aware that Assistant Secretary Carson had expressed concern about his firing in a July 23 telephone conversation with President Sharif. (The SRSB and the French Ambassador in Nairobi have called Sharif, as well. The Somalia Unit has repeatedly pressured the Prime Minister to re-consider.) If ultimately fired, Sheikh told us he would loyally serve as Deputy Minister of National Security under

Abdullahi Ali.

Another Effort to Enlist
Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a in Hiraan

¶18. (C) Sheikh believed that the TFG ministers were generally underperforming. Asked to single out those who were in Mogadishu and attempting to advance the TFG agenda, he mentioned Minister of Women's Development Fauziya Mohammed Sheikh (who hails from Mohammed Sheikh's clan), Minister of Pastoral Development Kadija Mohammed Dirie, and Minister of Air and Land Transport Ali Ahmed Jama Jangile. Newly-appointed Minister of National Security Abdullahi Mohammed Ali would be traveling soon to Hiraan Region in an effort to re-establish links with militias from the Islamic Courts and from Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a. (That on-going effort had been interrupted by the June 18 assassination of former Minister of National Security Omar Hashi.)

Aweys in Decline

¶19. (C) Sheikh was dismissive of Hisbul Islam Chairman Hassan Dahir Aweys, whose influence he thought was in decline. Aweys would soon be "eaten" by al-Shabaab. Sheikh expected continued Hisbul Islam - al-Shabaab difficulties, and predicted that Hisbul Islam would diminish in size and influence. Its remnants, he predicted, would eventually be folded into al-Shabaab.

Comment

¶10. (C) The Somalia Unit became well acquainted with Mohammed Sheikh during the Djibouti sessions in December and January that led to the election of Sheikh Sharif. We found him to be loyal, reliable, and unassuming. Sheikh was a staunch member of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia - Asmara contingent, and has a close relationship with fellow Digil and Mirifle clan member, Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan, whom he admires. Although it is difficult to say with certainty why Sheikh was fired, it appears that someone has taken advantage of the July 14 kidnapping of the French government officials to attempt his ouster. Sheikh's removal for his alleged lapse seems unwarranted when compared with

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the track records of many of the TFG ministers, who rarely set foot in Mogadishu and have done little to advance the TFG's agenda. The intention to replace Sheikh with Attosh, an associate of the strongman Darwish, if it happens, does not seem likely to help Sharif's struggling government.
SLUTZ